

WITH MORE THAN 380 GOLF COURSES FROM STEM TO STERN, MANY OF THEM ON THE COAST OR SEQUESTERED AMONG THE ROLLING HEIGHTS OF THE BLUE RIDGE, IT'S NOT SURPRISING THAT GOLFING IN SOUTH CAROLINA OFFERS SOME DRAMATIC VISTAS.

WHY YOU CAN'T KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL.

Harbour Town Golf Links No.18

By Marc Rapport

One of the most striking views is along the coast, on a course mostly just a few feet above sea level: the par three 14th hole at Grande Dunes Golf Course in Myrtle Beach.

"You're already about 50 feet above the Intracoastal Waterway on a bluff, and then there's a 60-foot drop from the tee to the green, so you really get quite a dramatic view from up there," says Mike Buccerone, the general manager of golf at Grande Dunes.

That view takes in the waterway, of course, along with a good look at Grande Dunes Marina Village, a centerpiece of the Mediterranean-inspired architecture at the big resort complex with its storefronts, boardwalk, yacht-filled docks, and eye-catching inn and bridge.

Meanwhile, golfers can get even closer to sea level and find themselves playing sand shots from the beach itself. One such opportunity is the famed Links Course at Wild Dunes Resort on the Isle of Palms across the harbor from Charleston.

"The final two holes are the best of their kind in the world, with the ocean bordering the whole left side of the fairway, especially on our 412-yard, par four 17th. Hit it left and you're on the beach," says Jeff Minton, director of sports at Wild Dunes.

Considered a lateral hazard, you can take a whack at it if you can get down there. "At high tide, the water can be pretty much right up to the edge on No. 18, a 500-yard par five," Minton says. Of course, one of the most famous views

on a public golf course in South Carolina is the lighthouse at Harbour Town Golf Links (home of the Verizon Heritage each week after the Masters) on Hilton Head Island. If you feel a bit overwhelmed when walking up the fairway on No.18 at Harbour Town, you're not alone, even if you hit one into the seaside marsh protecting the approach.

"Even the pros tell us that it can be hard to concentrate, the scenery is so dramatic, with the marsh and the sound and the islands you can see out in the ocean, the pelicans and sometimes bald eagles... it's really absolutely gorgeous," said John Farrell, head pro at Harbour Town.

Meanwhile, up in the Blue Ridge, the water features at the Rock at Jocassee in Pickens County include a large, sliding-

rock waterfall on No.8, a 185-yard par three with a 60-foot drop to the green that also includes a vintage view of Pinnacle Mountain off in the not-too-far distance.

Renovated and re-named from Table Rock Golf Club, the Rock at Jocassee is near Table Rock State Park and shares much of the same kind of vista. "The thing about our course is that it's in a valley, surrounded by the mountains. So the views are fantastic but you don't get as many undulations and 'funky lies' as you think you would have in a place like this," said Mark Faile, the facility's head golf pro.

Another re-named course with unforgettable views is Cherokee Valley Golf Club near Travelers Rest and Tigerville in Greenville County. There, golfers face a 100-foot elevation change at the relatively short, 340-yard No.13, one that tempts long drivers to try to cut through the dog-leg but more realistically offers a 205-yard lay up to a landing area, said Greg Moore, director of golf and club operations.

The course originally opened in 1993 as the Gauntlet and recently underwent hundreds of thousands of dollars in improvements. It now is the home of a *Golf Digest* school and part of the Clubs at Cherokee Valley residential community.

"We're just north of Paris Mountain, and on the front side of the course you can see Glassy Mountain. No.6 in particular offers a breathtaking view. It's a 200-yard par three that plays a little downhill," Moore says.

Offering mountain views from another angle is Falcon's Lair Golf Course, right off the Cherokee Foothills National Scenic Highway (SC 11) about seven miles north of Walhalla.

A favorite there is the par three 16th hole, a 140-yard shot over a pond onto a green surrounded by trees with a dramatic view of the Blue Ridge in the background, says James McCoy, head pro at Falcon's Lair. "The fall is particularly beautiful here, and the weather then is superb," he says.

No matter which course you play, in the Palmetto State you're guaranteed a great game of golf and a setting on par with the best of them.

Wild Dunes Links No.18

Grande Dunes Golf Course No.14

Falcon's Lair No.16